

**Evergreen Fire District
Board of Trustees
Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Regular Board Meeting of May 3rd, 2021 – 6:00 pm**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

Vice Chair DePaul calls meeting to order at 6:10 pm

TRUSTEES IN ATTENDANCE:

Brockman, Connolly, Fallon, DePaul (quorum is present)

EFD PERSONNEL IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Williams, Fire Marshal Covington

RECOGNIZE PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE:

(none)

(Meeting is interrupted by someone from the Census Bureau who is inquiring about an address on Helena Flats Road and states 'It's just an open field.' Fire Marshall Covington resolves the issue.)

PUBLIC COMMENT:

At this time, public may comment on any public matter that is not on the Agenda of the Meeting and that is within the jurisdiction of the District.

FINANCIALS:

Discuss and approve March 2021 Financials (Action)

Motion; Brockman to approve the checks written and accept the financial statements as presented; second by Connolly; motion passes by quorum.

PAST ITEMS/UPDATES:

1. **Election of Board Officers (Action)** – Fallon states the election of officers takes place in June.
(This item will go on Agenda for June)
2. **Removal of Chairman Verworn and Vice Chair Randal DePaul and addition of newly elected officers as signatories to accounts (Action)** – DePaul questions whether this is an action item and Chief Williams states that it is due to Glacier Bank policy. Fallon states that the addition and removal of trustees can't happen until 2 new trustees have been appointed to the Board.
(This item will go on a future agenda after 2 new trustees are appointed)
3. **Approve meeting minutes of March and April 2021 (Action)**
Motion; Brockman to accept the meeting minutes of March and April 2021; second by Connolly; motion passes by quorum.
4. **Update on employee manual**
Chief Williams states he is waiting for additional input from trustees. Fallon had not had a chance prior to the last meeting to review what Chief Williams had sent out. He states that he is aware there were grammatical and spelling errors and those will be corrected for the final draft. Brockman asks when approval is due. Chief Williams states there is no set time but reminds trustees that once approved, policy changes cannot be enacted for another 30 days. Brockman states that an approval in June so new policy can be enacted the beginning of a new fiscal year (July) would be a good goal.

5. Fire Chief Purchasing Authorization (Action)

Connolly states he presented a management technique that can be used as an easy presentation model for anything Chief Williams and Fire Marshall Covington might need guidance with. DePaul states that authorization focus has changed now to CIP expenditures. Chief Williams states that his main objective in bringing this item to the agenda is to know what the Board's expectation is in order to get a timely approval for 7250 expenditures (CIP) especially in a time sensitive situation. He states that when prepping for a new large purchase from CIP he would like to know what it is the Board is looking for in terms of presentation, or information trustees would like to receive prior to purchase, and he asks what trustees would like to see outside of a meeting so that approval can be streamlined at the board meeting.. He asks if trustees would prefer to see a presentation at the board meeting which would require an even longer board meeting. He states that he will be seeking more clarification on several other items once the handbook is completed including some procedural, operational and by-laws. Brockman asks when the SOG/SOP's were last revised and Chief Williams states 10 to 12 years ago but states there have been addendums made to meet the ebb and flow of the changes. He said the policies prior to revisions were developed more from a volunteer organization aspect. Connolly supports receiving information and/or a presentation regarding CIP purchases a week or 2 in advance of a board meeting so that the approval can be streamlined with most questions being asked and answered prior to the meeting and will not require a board meeting to run even longer. Chief Williams agrees with Trustee Connolly. Brockman is in support of Connolly's presentation model. Fallon states if the presentation/information was given 7 to 10 days prior to a meeting in the model format it could work well. Covington states that due to time sensitivity on certain types of purchases it is difficult to be confident that all Trustees will receive, review and fully understand a presentation prior to a meeting. He states that the agenda for the current meeting was sent out well in advance and had 2 items on it that should not have been included until the June meeting. He states no one caught it until everyone was sitting for this meeting. He states his concern is that a format will be developed but not followed. Chief Williams states he is in support of the format but brings up the need for flex-ability in an emergency situation. DePaul states in an urgent situation it would only be necessary to reach out to the Board Chairman who can make an executive decision or call for a special meeting if time permits.

Motion; Brockman to adopt the management technique/format with the caveat of emergency circumstances in which the Chairman and Fire Chief will work together to make a necessary purchase and discussed at the next meeting;

Fallon states it is the Chairman's function to determine 'this is the procedure we are going to follow until further notice'. He feels this is an administrative function and not a motion that results in a policy. DePaul and Brockman agree with Fallon. Connolly states that is what the model format was intended for. Covington asks if the Board wants a resolution or a motion for the CIP expenditures. He and Chief Williams state that a motion is what has been being used and is much simpler than a resolution. Brockman states that if a motion is all that's been required by the County then stick with a motion. Fallon states that in most special districts which are typically water, sewer, fire and etc., an action requires a resolution but could not find any documentation to support that thought at that time. Brockman states that the Board should then continue with a motion until something to the contrary is made known.

6. FY 2020 Audit Update

Chief Williams states that he didn't have anything to update other than he knows Cheri has been keeping everyone updated on the process and that Fallon and Brockman met with Tony Vanorny at the station. Fallon points out the email document in the packet addressing the approval of the JCCS audit contract for the next 3 years.

NEW ITEMS:

1. Equipment Surplus (Action)

Chief Williams states he needs the Board permission to declare the District's 1998 Ford F550 surplus so that it can be dismantled and sold. The bed and all equipment will be installed in the new Dodge Ram 5500 wildland rig. Brockman asks if surplus items are appraised. Fallon states only real estate requires an appraisal. Covington asks if items always have to go to bid and Fallon confirms that it does in order to protect the entity of being accused of favoritism and a lawsuit.

Motion; Fallon to declare surplus the District's 1998 Ford F550 scabbard chassis; second by Brockman; passes by quorum present.

2. Discussion regarding approval of signing the sidewalk RSID and RMD petition (Action)

Chief Williams states while he is in full support of the petition there has been no one who has contacted him or the Department so he is glad that Fallon was contacted or he would have been 'completely in the dark'. Fallon states MDT grant max is 1 million dollars. The proposal is for \$950,000 to \$980,000 with the local share of approximately \$160,000. He refers to a map attached to the petition and refers to an area of properties that will be assessed \$160,000 with another area (in white) being assessed at a 20% rate (assessment on existing sidewalk) and another area (in red) being assessed at an 80% rate (new sidewalk). He states the difference being the white areas don't need as much if any construction as opposed to the red areas. The RSID cost would be paid back over a 20 year term at an interest. Property owners have the option of paying the balance after the first year to avoid the interest charges. The maintenance district will have an ongoing assessment in perpetuity because Flathead County doesn't want to approve any more bypass sidewalks or anything of the kind unless there is a mechanism in place for maintenance and put a moratorium on it. MDT despises sidewalks also due to plowing maintenance and want to transfer the liability to someone else. Fallon states that is the purpose of the RMD in areas. A petition is being proposed and put in front of County Commissioners as soon as possible by at least 60% of the property owners to request an RSID. Brockman states the Commissioners now want 80% and Fallon states 80% isn't required by law; it's 60% or more and when a petition is submitted they have to approve it.

He speculates that a notice to create an RSID would get mailed out in 60 days; created and funded (theoretically) by September 1; assessments would go on property tax notices received November 1; construction occurring at the earliest by next summer. The assessments would accrue in order to pay back the debt and maintenance with maintenance accruing for a couple of years before actually being used for maintenance. Covington asks what the District's cost would be. Fallon states based on the information provided; the RSID would be \$172 per year for 20 years and the maintenance would be \$405 in perpetuity and would go up over time. He states the school district will be paying \$2,000 per year for the RSID and just under \$1,100 per year for maintenance. Chief Williams questions why it is not extended farther North and to Ridgewood where there are 200 trailer spaces and is where the majority of kids walking past the fire station are walking to. Fallon states the project is limited to their estimated costs and can only go so far. He states he did have discussions asking if they had looked at sidewalks in Evergreen, Columbia Falls, Coram, and Whitefish for different side walk widths, designs etc. He used the sidewalk in front of Station 81 as an example since it is not the traditional 40" wide sidewalk. He was told "We told the engineering firm what we want and this is what they came up with." He states they needed a proposal to put in front of the commissioners. Once it is approved it all goes to MDT to design it. Chief Williams asks who the organizers of the current group are. Fallon states the Evergreen Chamber of Commerce is the organizing group. Chief Williams reiterates his support of the project but reiterates Covington's concern that district tax payers could take issue with their tax dollars going towards this project. He asks what the District's response will be if and when it happens. Brockman states his response would be that the District promotes safety in the community and wants to be proactive in ensuring that children and all pedestrians can safely walk to their destinations. Fallon states the project is consistent with safety. He states that taxpayers

could also be told that the costs will be paid with EMS or wildland fire revenue. He also poses the option of paying off the RSID after the first year if there had been substantial wild land revenue or funds could be put into 4212 and a check written to the County each year. Covington asks if the District will be a responsible party when the project expands. Fallon states each expansion would be a 'stand alone' district and that it would be multiple districts and the County would take over the contracts for the maintenance of everything with 3 or 4 maintenance districts they would be responsible for.

Motion; Fallon to approve Evergreen Fire District's support for the petition to create a rural special improvement district for installing sidewalk connectivity and maintenance on the District's properties associated with the Evergreen Sidewalk Project and authorize the Chair to execute appropriate documents in support of the RSID and the RMD; second by Brockman; passes by quorum present.

3. Preliminary Budget Discussion

7204-Fallon states that currently there is an 'actual vs. budget' report that is accessible in QuickBooks but still unable to get the budget to match up with actual line items; biggest issue being with personnel. Covington states there have been the additions (per Board approval) of Health and Wellness and Wildland. Fallon asks what type of work does the 100 hours represent for 'Firefighter I and II'. Chief Williams states it's for the pre-season preparation; apparatus, tools and training. Fallon questions the payroll cost. Chief Williams states there would need to be 30% added to the payroll cost and would be the same classification of a hydrant technician – temporary seasonal. Brockman asks how much over-budget did unexpected costs of Covid 19 put the District. Chief Williams states \$8400 was incurred in Covid related PPE expenses, only and mostly attributed to the cost of N95 masks. Covington states that the EMS budget is over by approximately \$3000.00 and is all Covid related expenses. Fallon asks if the documentation for all Covid related expenses is ready for submission to the State; such as PPE, labor and etc. Chief Williams states that Cheri has been sending in the 'first reports' to MSF and VFIS whenever personnel has been put in quarantine and/or tested positive for Covid and that personnel on Covid positive transports have received a 'slight bump' in their mileage pay. Covington states that all Covid transports are noted on timesheets but states he expects it may be difficult to get reimbursement from the State for the bump in mileage and account for the extra time it takes to decontaminate ambulances. Fallon suggests that to begin figuring the additional time/cost to start with identifying the dollar amount of the increase and then identify the additional time necessary (pre, during, and post transport) and then to take that time factor and use some kind of rate per hour. Covington asks if there are any questions regarding wages in the budget. He states COLA may be high. Fallon states that COLA falls in easily for the prior year and that COLA for year to date is below that; depending on which index is being used but states it's a good place holder for now. Covington states that 'raises' is at 3% as has been traditionally done. Chief Williams states 3% is performance based and not everyone will get the full 3%. Chief Williams states that more research need to be done as there are some coding issues and he will be speaking with the accountant regarding the benefits. Brockman asks if the administration of benefits is going well. Chief Williams opinion is that the benefits are not being used in the way he thought they would or intended as a District. He states they are being under-utilized with very few participating in the IRA and medical benefits. Medical non participation is most probably due to most personnel having another job outside of EFD with better benefits. Eligible personnel opt out of the medical benefits and take the HRA. Fallon states that an IRA with a higher contribution rate will come with an upfront cost as well as the cost of a third party to manage it. A 5 or 6 percent contribution rate would mostly likely result in more participation and would create a financial dilemma. Fallon compares the medical benefits participation to the HRA participation and asks if personnel aren't participating in health insurance why aren't they spending the HRA? Covington states that it may be a coding error and the question he needs to ask the accountant is if it is being coded as insurance or a transfer (HRA). Fallon is questioning why eligible personnel would not

take the HRA. Chief Williams states the fire service has a history of retirement after 20 years. It's a hard job and even harder after age 45. He states while 3% retirement is better than the zero prior to that; it is still not competitive and the District continues to lose good personnel to other departments. He states someone could never retire on a 3% match and most could never contribute enough out of pocket with the wages they make. Chief Williams states if the IRA funds were ever capped out there would be other money that could help with the cost. DePaul asks if a minimum could be 3% with match increasing or decreasing based on funds available. Brockman states it can't and shouldn't be done that way because it creates instability. Fallon states a 401K would allow variable contributions but is not available to non-profits and that there are very few that allow for a variable contribution which is why the District went with the SIMPLE IRA at 3% with no discrimination. Connolly's concern is that things aren't being budgeted high enough and cites the legal budget of \$2000 for the past 2 years as an example. Chief Williams states he and Covington have looked at the budget vs. actual and it has increased for fuel, electricity, and audit. Covington moves on to discussing revenue and states EMS revenue is approximately 1.2 million. He states cash for fund 7204 hasn't been determined and Fallon states figuring cash would be better done in mid-June and that the Board should plan on approving the budget by the July or August meeting. Brockman states the entitlement from the State seems low and Fallon explains it's received in 4 installments. Fallon states there needs to be \$500,000 to cover average monthly expenditures to satisfy the budget. Covington states there will better estimates in June. Fallon suggests Covington replace 2 line items with 1 line item titled 'Loan' and enter the total amount. Chief Williams states the County put in a large radio grant for the County. The concern is what the expenditure would be based on a county-wide loan. If the County doesn't receive the loan the cost of the radio would go up incrementally and closer to \$90,000. He hopes to know in the next 3 or 4 months if the County receives the AFG grant. He states if not then the problem will be that the radios everyone has were purchased on a similar county-wide loan approximately 10 years ago and are no longer supported by Kenwood and no longer being repaired by them. He states the loan would cover 20 portable radios and 10 mobile radios for every fire department in the County. Fallon suggests to Covington that he budgets as if the County doesn't received the grant and then use a state-wide purchasing program to purchase the radios. Chief Williams agrees and states he would purchase the radios through a co-op.

PROPOSALS:

(none)

RESOLUTIONS:

(none)

CHIEF'S REPORT:

1. March 2021 Call Volume

A) Comparison Incident Count by Weekday/Hour (all zones) for March 2021

B) Comparison Incident Statistics for March 2021

Chief Williams states that in March there were 297 total calls vs. 244 calls last year. January through March of 2021 there were 880 vs. 806 this time last year. IFT's are currently at 418 vs. 343 at this time last year. He states there has been a slight decline of mutual aid calls to the City of Kalispell and they continue to hire more staff. Fallon points out there have been an increase in mutual aid calls to Creston. Chief Williams states it is mostly due to grass fires with a few structure fires too. He states there is a bit of a decline in long distance IFT's vs. the shorter transports and sees that as a positive with the addition of the 2 hourly positions and expects to remain competitive in that area. Brockman asks why the response time is 2 minutes higher than it was last year on average. Chief Williams states there are variables that affect that number including all of the mutual aid areas for both fire and EMS. He tells Brockman that the numbers of concern are the 'Dispatch to En-route' times. Fallon asks what the most recent developments

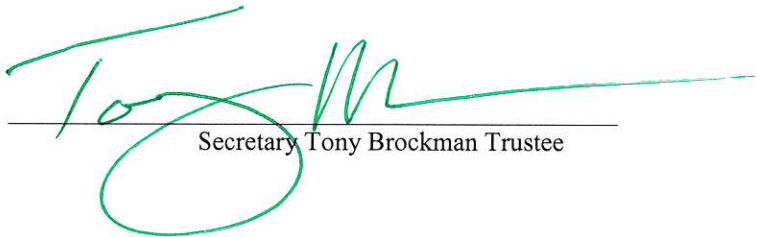
are regarding IFT's in the past 30 days or will it be more based on when the 2 or 4 personnel hired hourly to take those. Chief Williams states that's correct and that the District has hired 3 personnel and will be placing an ad and hiring outside of the department for the 4th position of FT/Medic – IFT . Chief Williams states he will then meet with North Valley and present to them on the District's ability to be able to respond more quickly without the 45 minute issue that had existed prior. He states he picked up 4 special event contracts and is now for the first time ever looking at the possibility of starting to advertise inter-facility transports to the general public. He states there are 2 companies that currently provide this service; 1 out of Billings and 1 out of Bozeman and neither are affiliated with any hospitals. Both entities transport patients from point A to B across the country and is primarily to their home and not a hospital or medical facility.

Adjourn @ 8:56 PM

The President of the Board of Trustees, as presiding officer of any meeting of the Board of Trustees, may close the meeting during the time the discussion relates to a matter of individual privacy; and, then, if, and only if, the presiding officer determines that the demands of individual privacy clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure. The right of individual privacy may be waived by the individual about whom the discussion pertains; and, in that event, the meeting must be open.



Chairman Fallon or Vice Chair Connolly



Secretary Tony Brockman Trustee